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NEW TESTS FOR A NEW ERA.

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COLLABORATION OF THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION (MLA) AND THE EDUCATIONAL TESTING SERVICE PRODUCED STANDARDIZED TESTS FOR LANGUAGE STUDENTS AND TEACHERS IN THE FIVE MOST COMMONLY TAUGHT LANGUAGES--FRENCH, RUSSIAN, ITALIAN, GERMAN, AND SPANISH. STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN THE LISTENING, SPEAKING, READING, AND WRITING SKILLS IS MEASURED BY THE MLA COOPERATIVE FOREIGN LANGUAGE TESTS. IN ADDITION TO TESTING THESE SKILLS, THE MLA FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY TESTS FOR TEACHERS AND ADVANCED STUDENTS ALSO MEASURE PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION, CIVILIZATION AND CULTURE, AND APPLIED LINGUISTICS. SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR BOTH TESTS ARE SUPPLIED. THIS ARTICLE APPEARS IN "AUDIOVISUAL INSTRUCTION," VOLUME 7, NUMBER 9, NOVEMBER 1962, PAGES 634-636. (AF)

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NEW TESTS

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TEACHING AND TESTING go hand in hand. It is natural that the profound changes now taking place in foreign language teaching—emphasis on the spoken language, limited vocabulary at the beginning stage, curtailment of translation, delayed introduction of reading and writing—should in turn call for new standardized tests. In this article, I shall describe two sets of tests. One is for measuring student achievement, the other for measuring teacher proficiency. The former is nearing completion, while the latter is complete and available. Both have been constructed under provisions of the National Defense Education Act (Title VI).

MLA Cooperative Foreign Language Tests

A joint effort of the Modern Language Association and the Educational Testing Service, the MLA Cooperative Foreign Language Tests are being developed by committees of language teachers working under the direction of Nelson Brooks. The tests in the series measure each of the four skills—listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing—in the five most commonly taught languages: French, Spanish, Italian, German, and Russian. There are two levels of each skill in each language, a higher and lower, and there are alternate forms of each test. The tests will be offered for sale by the Cooperative Test Division of the Educational Testing Service (Princeton, New Jersey) starting in the late fall of 1963. Their contents are as follows.

The Listening Comprehension Test uses a tape recording, booklet and answer sheet. There are 50 items, and the test takes 30 minutes.* The lower level forms have this format:

Part A: Choose from among four pictures the one which corresponds to the sentence heard.

Part B: Choose from among four statements the one which best answers the question heard.

*Times given here are for present forms. Final forms will be

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FOR A NEW ERA

Paul Pimsleur

Parts C-F: A piece of conversation is overheard and then questions asked about it, e.g.: "de qué se trata?" (a) de comer (b) de limpiar la casa (c) de cocinar (d) de lavar la ropa.

The higher-level tests use only the format of parts C-F. A scene is set, e.g., Nous sommes à l'école, then a piece of conversation is heard and questions asked about it.

Speaking Test (about 15 minutes.) The student hears instructions from the master tape, and records his responses on an individual tape (or disc). He uses a booklet for some parts of the test. The higher-level tests use the same format as the lower, but with more complex stimuli. The tasks are these:

Part A: The student repeats short phrases after the native voice. The phrases contain samples of various pronounciation and intonation problems.

Part B: The student reads aloud.

Part C: The student sees a picture, e.g., a girl washing her hands. He is directed to answer a question asked about the picture by the native voice, e.g., Que fait la petite fille?

Part D: The student describes each of two pictures. Then he describes a situation depicted in a sequence of four pictures.

Reading Test. The test is in two parts, has a total of 50 items, and requires 40 minutes for completion.

Part A (lower level):

1. Tu cherches toujours tes gants?*
   As-tu pensé à regarder dans . . .?
   (a) ton tapis
   (b) ton couvert
   (c) tes poches
   (d) tes bas

Part A (higher level):

1. Dans la fôret la paix était profonde.
   Aucun . . . ne frappa l'oreille.
   (a) oiseau
   (b) orage
   (c) bruit
   (d) bois

*Test items are reproduced with the permission of the Modern Language Association of America, copyright holders.

Part B (both levels): The student reads a number of brief passages, answers two or three questions about each. Here is an example from the lower level French Reading Test.

Robert pousse un cri de joie: dans la lettre que sa soeur lui envoie pour ses quinze ans, il trouve un billet de cinq cents francs! C'est la première fois qu'il en voit un, et il le montre à tout le monde.

26. Robert vient de recevoir
   (a) sa première lettre.
   (b) une invitation de sa soeur.
   (c) un cadeau d'anniversaire.
   (d) une montre.

27. Depuis l'arrivée de cette lettre, Robert a quelque chose qu'il
   (a) avait déjà refusé.
   (b) avait perdu autrefois.
   (c) avait reçu souvent.
   (d) n'avait jamais vu avant.

Writing test. The tests are in three parts, and take 40 minutes to administer.

Part A (lower level):

Supply a single correct word.

1. Nous étudions . . . . . histoire de France.
11. "Comment va Marie?" "Je ne sais pas; je ne . . . . . vois plus."

Rewrite second verb in same tense as first verb.

28. Elle est très gentille; elle vient me voir tous les jours.
   Elle a été très gentille; elle . . . . . me voir tous les jours.

Part A (higher level):

1. J'aime beaucoup . . . . . café, mais ce soir je prends du thé.
11. "Vous partez?" "Oui, je n'ai plus rien . . . . . faire ici."

[Continued on the next page]

Part B. (lower level):
Rewrite as indicated.
33. Il a sali son beau costume bleu.
Elle ..... robe .....

Part B (higher level):
Reply as indicated.
31. Est-ce qu'il t'a beaucoup recommandé cette pièce?
Oui, il .....

Part C: On both lower and higher levels, the first task of Part C is to turn certain given components into a coherent passage or dialogue. For instance (lower level):

Write a 6-line dialogue in the "tu" form, using all the expressions given below.
Louis: belle journeé
Paul: bicyclette
Louis: aller
Paul: Versailles
Louis: chemin
Paul: carte routière

The second task of Part C (lower level) consists of writing a paragraph in the foreign language, describing what is taking place in a picture shown in the booklet. The student is requested to answer certain questions, such as, "Quel temps fait-il? "Que porte le garçon a la main?" etc. At the higher level the student is asked to compose a paragraph by filling given elements into a given slot, for example: Hier matin, l'astronaute Bernard est parti pour son voyage a Mars que (monde/ attendre/ impatience).

MLA Teacher Tests

In addition to the student achievement tests just described, a different MLA project has developed a set of tests for measuring the adequacy of the teacher's preparation. Called the MLA Foreign Language Proficiency Tests for Teachers and Advanced Students, they are presently available in the five most common languages from the Educational Testing Service (to authorized users). Constructed by committees of language teachers under the direction of Wilmarth H. Starr, these tests will probably be widely used as a standard of teacher preparation by teacher training institutions, state boards of certification, and prospective employers. At this writing, they have been adopted by two states (Pennsylvania and Delaware), are under consideration by several others, and are being used in a number of academic institutions.

The teacher tests cover seven areas of competency. Four of these are the language skills: listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing. These four tests are not unlike the student tests already described, though at a higher level of proficiency. The other three areas tested are: Professional Preparation, Civilization and Culture, and Applied Linguistics. Since these are rather unfamiliar areas for testing, some examples are given here:

Professional Preparation Test—65 items, 45 minutes

SAMPLE:* A fundamental principle of audio-lingual teaching is that:
(a) the written language is primary because it is the record of mankind's accomplishments.
(b) a thorough phonetic analysis of the sounds of the foreign language is the basis of good teaching.
(c) the language laboratory provides the most effective means of training language behavior.
(d) the spoken language takes precedence over all other forms.

Civilization and Culture Test (French)—60 items, 30 minutes

SAMPLE: Americans are often surprised at the long lunch period in France, during which stores and offices are closed. The best explanation of this phenomenon is that:
(a) the French do not care as much about making money.
(b) there is not enough room in the restaurants.
(c) stores and offices stay open longer in the evening.
(d) the labor unions insist on a long lunch period.

SAMPLE: The regime which followed the First French Republic was:
(a) The Second Republic.
(b) The Restoration.
(c) The First Empire.
(d) The Second Empire.

Applied Linguistics Test (French)—55 items, 50 minutes

The test is divided into several parts, which concentrate on various areas of the applied linguistics of French, such as phonetics, the writing system, syntax, etc.

SAMPLE: Which of the following pairs might a Frenchman pronounce identically?
(a) l'Ain, l'un
(b) sont, sans
(c) sure, soeur
(d) vent, vin

SAMPLE: One of these English sentence patterns may cause interference with the corresponding French pattern. Which one?
(a) He has never done that.
(b) Why have you sent two telegrams?
(c) Explain it to him!
(d) Has Roger already found his present?

• • •

The function of this article is merely to describe—to make known to the foreign language teaching profession and to others the new tests which will no doubt exercise considerable influence in the coming years. Once the tests with their manuals and norms are available for general use, it will be up to the profession to evaluate them, to make constructive criticism, and to contribute to their further development. At the same time, we must acknowledge our debt to the U.S. Office of Education, the MLA, ETS, and the many committee members whose cooperative effort brought to fruition two huge testing projects (more than 150 tests in all) in the brief time since the NDEA was enacted.

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*This sample and the next four are not actual items from the tests, but were made up for purposes of illustration. The security of the teacher tests is guarded carefully.